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Violations of SALT, Spirit

By Michael Krepon

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If nothing else, Mikhail S. Gorbachev's arms-control initiatives demonstrate how different he is from previous Soviet leaders. Instead of past regimes' grudging concessions, Gorbachev makes bold gestures on several fronts simultaneously. His most recent proposals strongly suggest a readiness to deal.

As new agreements become more likely, hard-line opponents of detente in the United States will increasingly point to Soviet violations of past accords and the need for corrective action before new compacts are negotiated.

Leading the opposition are Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger and his deputy, Richard N. Perle, who accuse the Kremlin of an expanding pattern of major violations. Instead of new agreements, they want President Reagan to respond "proportionately" to Soviet misbehavior by violating existing Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) agreements.

For the second time in seven months, Weinberger and Perle have placed Reagan in a no-win position on continued U.S. SALT compliance by recommending that he put a new Trident submarine to sea without offsetting reductions—thereby violating the SALT ceiling on multiple-warhead missile launchers. Without this action, Weinberger argues, deterrence will be undermined and the Kremlin will proceed with more significant violations. This leaves Reagan in a bind: If he continues to adhere to SALT, he seemingly appeases Soviet misbehavior through inaction; if he breeches SALT ceilings, he moves the nation still further away from his goals of deep cuts and effective strategic defenses before his second summit meeting with Gorbachev.

A policy of proportionate responses to Soviet non-compliance only makes sense if there are no better alternatives, but Weinberger and Perle seem to be the ones who have lost perspective on this subject. The Administration's own reports on Soviet non-compliance do not document an increasing pattern of violations. Instead, they indicate that the number of substantive problems is small and has remained static for three years.

In the view of the Joint Chiefs of Staff these problems do not constitute enough of a threat to warrant U.S. SALT violations. The chiefs, according to Weinberger's own gratuitous letter of advice to the President prior to the Geneva summit, feel that full funding of the Administra-

tion's strategic modernization program and conventional force improvements would constitute an appropriate and proportionate response.

Now, however, with the passage of the Gramm-Rudman legislation, there may be no funds for further military expansion and the Pentagon has already gone on a spending spree during the first Reagan term. The most appropriate response to SALT violations continues to be the effective use of SALT's Standing Consultative Commission (SCC)—the forum created to resolve such problems—but Weinberger and Perle have quietly blocked SCC problem-solving while trumpeting their assertions of non-compliance.

The Reagan Administration compiles lists of Soviet violations by a process of bureaucratic compromise. During annual interagency reviews, representatives of the Defense Department and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency—both hostile to arms-control—attempt to compile the longest possible lists. Usually they are opposed by State Department and Central Intelligence Agency professionals with more rigorous standards of proof. Oddly enough, government lawyers have only a peripheral role in this process, even though difficult questions of international law are involved. The central players in compliance disputes are the same policy analysts working for Weinberger and Secretary of State George P. Shultz who clash on most everything concerning U.S.-Soviet relations. The President's national security adviser usually adjudicates compliance disputes in the usual Reagan Administration fashion—by giving each side partial satisfaction.

Since the Soviets are not in the habit of doing favors for the United States, Administration ideologues have a steady supply of concerns that are quickly labeled violations. Their analysis by assertion leaves State and the CIA in the unenviable position of drawing distinctions between unhelpful and impermissible Soviet activities. Yet clear-cut citations of non-compliance are rare.

When the padding is removed from dubious citations, three issues stand out. The first is the Krasnoyarsk radar, located inland instead of at the periphery of the Soviet Union, where it belongs under the terms of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. The Soviets are also hard pressed to explain why their single warhead SS-25 missile does not constitute an impermissible second "new type" under the terms of the unratified SALT II Treaty. (The Soviets have also flight-tested a new 10-warhead missile, the SS-X-24.) The SS-25 is allowable under SALT II only when ingenious definitions of missile throw-weight are used. Finally, the Ad-

ministration contends that the Soviets violate SALT strictures against encryption when it impedes verification of treaty limitations—although Soviet encryption has not prevented U.S. confirmation of violations. Even so, the heavy level of Soviet encryption, like the obvious newness of the mobile SS-25 missile, poses serious political as well as potential monitoring problems.

We know that Soviet encryption increased in early 1980. Construction probably began on the Krasnoyarsk radar in late 1981 and the Soviets began flight-testing their two new missiles shortly before and after the death of Leonid I. Brezhnev in 1982. During this period the entire fabric of previous arms-control agreements appeared to be unraveling.

Then, when Andropov came to power, a different pattern emerged. In early 1983, confirmed reports of "Yellow Rain" stopped, and subsequent compliance questions have been similar to those routinely resolved in the SCC under prior Administrations. While past substantive disputes continue, the Kremlin has been careful not to add any. And despite Perle's assertion that the SCC has been unsuccessful since 1981, the Kremlin has satisfied U.S. concerns on peripheral issues in this forum, as shown by two agreements last June. With one possible exception, the Soviets have also stayed within SALT limits by dismantling submarines, missile launchers and bombers as newer versions have been deployed.

The exception concerns fewer than 20 Bison bombers—30-year-old relics of little use as new Soviet cruise missile-carrying bombers become operational. The Soviets claim they have converted these bombers into refueling aircraft. The United States can't tell, in part because there are no agreed procedures for such conversions. The SCC had almost worked out procedures when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. Then, after SALT II was not ratified, the Soviets balked at completion. Over the past five years, the Reagan Administration has made no attempt to wind up those procedures in the SCC. When the U.S. commissioner, retired Gen. Richard H. Ellis, attempted to discuss the Bisons last July, Weinberger sent strenuous objections to the White House. Whether Reagan became involved is unclear, but Ellis was directed not to discuss dismantlement in the fall, 1985, session of the SCC. Now the Administration's December report on Soviet non-compliance cites the Bisons as a violation of SALT ceilings.

Bomber procedures could be devised once Weinberger and Perle withdraw

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opposition. Solutions are also available for the remaining SALT compliance problems. The encryption problem is not irreversible, but the Kremlin should take the initiative by reducing levels on future tests.

Several appropriate responses are available to resolve the controversy over new missile "types": The United States can propose that neither side deploy its new, 10-warhead missile, or proceed to flight test and deploy a second new ICBM, the single-warhead Midgetman. The Administration signaled its lack of interest in the latter response by accepting Perle's plan to ban mobile ICBMs in its latest negotiating proposal. The United States should also seek verifiable assurances that the SS-25 and its successors will not be flight-tested with more than one re-entry vehicle, thus preventing the Soviets from exploiting this gray area.

The Kremlin now appears ready to resolve the radar problem. It has offered to stop work at Krasnoyarsk if the United States terminates construction on its new phased array radar in Greenland and does not begin a radar upgrade in the United Kingdom. The Reagan Administration claims these facilities are grandfathered by the ABM Treaty, however both are not located on the periphery of the United States and oriented outward—the criteria for citation against Krasnoyarsk. The Soviets claim both are violations.

The Kremlin's offer on Krasnoyarsk provides a clear opening to discuss generic problems and specific solutions associated with such radars. But it takes two sides to clear up this problem. Ellis attempted to explore, with the Soviets, alternative resolutions to the radar problem, along with the dismantlement procedures, last July. The White House has yet to respond. As long as this bureaucratic deadlock continues, the Reagan Administration will repeat its demands that the Soviets cease construction or tear down the Krasnoyarsk radar—the only position that warring factions within the Administration have agreed on.

Long after the Reagan Administration moved away from its initial, non-negotiable positions in Geneva, the United States continues to adhere to its opening gambits in the SCC. Continued bureaucratic obstruction is easy to achieve, especially when the President shies away from details and fails to impose discipline on Cabinet officers and their lieutenants.

As long as this continues, Reagan remains a victim as well as an accomplice to bureaucratic intrigue. Subsequent no-win decisions over continued SALT compliance will follow, because Weinberger, Perle and their allies in Congress are not content to halt progress toward new arms-control accords; their ultimate target is what remains of the SALT agreements. □

Michael Krepon, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, is author of "Strategic Stalemate: Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control in American Politics."